



## **CYBERCRIME: PROTECT YOUR CHILD ONLINE**

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There is no doubt that the internet can be an amazing tool. The educational information that is available on line is constantly growing. Furthermore, the tools that are available to communicate and conduct business is ever expanding. However, this great tool comes with no written safety instructions. The Center for Missing and Exploited Children conducted a recent study that found that of children between the ages of 10 and 17, one in five received in the last year an unwanted sexual solicitation. This number is shocking and a wake up call to all parents.

The following is a quick reference guide to help parents and kids surf the internet safely and productively. I would encourage you to do even more research on your own.

### **TIPS FOR PARENTS**

Decide as a family what your internet/computer rules will be and post them on the monitor. A sample checklist is available on the NCDOJ website.

Decide with your child when and how long they can be online, and what activities are allowed.

Computers should not be in the kids rooms but out in a communal area of the home, where parents can easily see the screen.

Do not allow young children to use the Internet alone. With older children, use it with them or check what they are doing frequently.

Know your child's e-mail password and supervise their email.

Know who your children are chatting with or emailing.

Kids screen names should not provide clues about them personally. For example avoid screen names that would hint at their sex, age, or other affiliation.

Check with your internet service provider about firewalls, spam blockers and any filtering software that they may offer. This should be used in addition to parental supervision.

If you don't know much about the Internet, take the time to learn the basics. Don't be embarrassed to ask your child to show you what they can do online and how it works.

Consult regularly teachers, librarians, and other parents for advice and tips.

Research available software frequently to find out what new options and protections are available to know what your kids are doing on line as well as control what they can see while on line.

Find out what safeguards are in place at your child's school, friends' homes, and the public library and decide if it's appropriate for your child to use the Internet in those places without your supervision.

Consider sharing an email account with your kids so you can know who is contacting them.

Any email offer that's "too good to be true" probably is and make sure your kids learn this lesson. Be very careful about any email offers that involve coming to a meeting, someone visiting your house, or sending money or credit card information. This can place you and your child in jeopardy.

Kids need respect and adult supervision.

## **TEACH YOUR KIDS**

Never release personal information online such as his or her name, parents name, age, address, phone number, e-mail address, passwords, schedule or the name or location of their school.

Keep your child's identity private in any public forum or chat room - use screen names and email addresses that do not reveal a child's sex, age, school, name etc.

Never post anything on the Internet that you wouldn't want the public at large to know.

Never share photographs with others online. Even a picture of a pet may reveal something in the background about the identity of the child or a parent.

Never set up a meeting face to face with anyone without a parent's permission and have a parent attend the meeting in a public place.

Strangers on the Internet are no different from strangers on the street.

Sometimes people misrepresent their age, sex or interests online to befriend a child. Thus, someone indicating that "she" is a "12-year-old girl" could in reality be a 40-year-old man.

Ask permission before communicating with anyone online that a parent does not personally know.

Never respond to solicitations online. Even in kids' chat rooms obscene solicitations may occur. Let a parent know when they occur.

Lying about his or her age and work status online may seem fun, but, it could have lasting consequences.

Ask a parent first before signing up for any free deals, providing anyone with an email address or make any other commitments online.

Let a parent know if he or she receives e-mail from anybody they do not know or receive any other Internet communication from someone they do not know.

**Contact the North Carolina SBI or the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's CyberTipline at 1-800-843-5678 or [www.missingkids.com/cybertip](http://www.missingkids.com/cybertip) if you feel that an inappropriate contact has been made with your child.**